

Punjab Reconsidered: History, Culture, and Practice

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(p.xv) Punjab in History and Historiography

An Introduction

This volume seeks to consider the notion of *Punjabiyyat*, a loosely defined term often used to describe a sentiment of belonging or attachment to Punjab and/or the foundations of a shared, cross-religious, cross-caste, cross-class culture. Is there an ‘idea of Punjab’ or ‘ideas of Punjab’ that help ground—as Punjabi—people from the region, now scattered across the globe? Or that connect those in Indian and Pakistani Punjab, divided by what is for most of them an impermeable border? In other words, despite political, social, religious—indeed, historical—differences, are there notions of *Punjabiyyat/Punjabiness* that constitute Punjab as a region conceptually in history, culture, and practice? The essays in this volume, through their careful analyses of aspects of Punjabi social, cultural, political, and religious history, taken collectively suggest that there are, indeed.

Part of the impetus for this collection is that volumes on Punjabi culture/s or histories—especially of its modern period—have not been commonplace in academic circles. One is more likely to come across **(p.xvi)** titles that delve into specific aspects of its culture or people, for instance works on ‘Sikh religion’ or the ‘Sikh people’, ‘Islamic identity’ or ‘Hindu reform’ in their Punjabi regional context. Such endeavours are entirely valid and reasonable, and perhaps even necessary, but it is difficult to comprehend the elision if not erasure of Punjabi identity from academic writing. Given that it has been easier for diasporic Punjabis to evoke a much wider and an inclusive Punjabi identity than it has been for Punjabis residing in India or Pakistan, one wonders if this elision is yet another result of the political divisions that have marked Punjab’s twentieth-century history? Have these divisions, whether of 1947 or the postcolonial period, made other identity markers more apt or emotionally more satisfying than the idea of belonging/originating/associating with a region? Or could it be

that Punjabi identity is particularly open to appropriation, and even incorporation within other identities—for instance Sikh identity in Indian Punjab?

We think this is the right moment to re-imagine and re-configure Punjab and notions of Punjabin, not only in light of a complex past, but also on the threshold of a globalizing future that is reconstituting both subjects and subjectivity. Each essay in this volume attempts to do this to some extent, while engaging with a specific aspect of Punjabi history and culture. Taken as a whole, the volume both presents critical and varied analyses of Punjab's complex cultures and helps reflect on Punjabin in its many manifestations.

It is of course difficult to measure, calibrate, or concretize the multiple ways in which Punjabin was—and is—lived, experienced, and vitalized. However we wish to make an effort to capture a somewhat elusive, often unstable and shifting 'idea of Punjab'. If we can propose a *raison d'être* for this volume, it is surely the need to explore this 'idea' in its myriad forms. The temptation is to define it as a primordial, patriotic feeling localized around a region and its culture. But that would be misleading, historically speaking, as Punjab neither had a stable region nor a single culture. In this volume, the perspectives presented on Punjabin include in their reach people physically present in politically split but geographically contiguous Punjab and those who left its environs long ago yet continue to call themselves Punjabi and/or engage in and identify with aspects of its culture/s. The emotions associated with Punjabin might be ethereal, but that does not **(p.xvii)** make them unreal. The idea of Punjab, or Punjabin might live in the imagination, but such is the nature of identity. The attempt in this volume is not to lend s(t)olidity to the concept, but to capture its variability in different forms, and over a period of time, including its contemporary manifestations.

Methodological Foundations

This volume marks a point of departure in the study of Punjab by emphasizing a cultural history of the region and its peoples. The turn towards cultural history is now established and is particularly apposite in contending with questions of what constitutes communities, peoples, selves, or how these are represented. As a volume that brings together diverse perspectives on Punjabi cultures, the term 'culture' is understood in the widest possible sense—mentalities and social texts, symbols and cultural representations, elite and popular cultures, social codes and their performance and reception¹—and a variety of methodological and disciplinary techniques have been employed for its analysis. For example, as we use the term, it also refers to the material cultures of a period, or even a culture specific to class/es. Thus the Annales school's foundational emphasis on studying mentalities—mental habits and the barely perceptible changes therein, especially in the *longue duree*—continues to be of vital significance. The anthropological perspective on studying cultural codes of societies, whether

through 'thick description' or by analysing the symbols and rituals of a culture is equally important, as is the desire to study cultural texts for their meanings; so too is Foucault's notion of discursive practices as sites both for constituting power and for its subversion. Each of these methods has been crucial to contemporary scholarship on Punjab, as they have to studies of identities. Beyond these foundations, the power of discourses, signs of change, and modes of subversion are a significant constituent of this volume as well, as are insights from literary criticism. The latter have facilitated the deconstruction of social and discursive practices and the de-centring of cultural texts, loosened societies and cultures from stable moorings, and encouraged an examination of diverse voices.

(p.xviii) Cultural texts are surely an important site of analysis in the essays that follow, and texts have been interrogated not only for their meanings, but also for how they work, their manifold reception, and their appropriation to new and different ends. The linguistic turn with its emphasis on cultural self-expression through language, and the feminist perspective, which has helped unravel the gendered aspects of language, have been influential theories whose impact will also be visible in the following pages. Indeed, the essays in this volume use these and other methods to provide compelling and sophisticated analyses of the cultural foundations of historical change.

Most of the contributors in this volume, though not all, are historians, and though the interdisciplinarity that the linguistic and cultural turns in history have encouraged is undoubtedly evidenced here, so is the historian's preoccupation with context. Readers will thus find the specificity of social or political milieus carefully laid out for them, rather than an adherence to post-modernist trends that pursue the study of cultural texts and artefacts as free-floating signs, capable of generating endless interpretive possibilities. We use the term practice to capture this emphasis on context, particularly to draw attention to the importance of historical time, and to ground cultural praxis in temporal frames and social networks.

Our underscoring of practice is also grounded in the work it allows us to do in analysing the relationship between ideality, ideology and lived histories. How are the ideals of a society transmitted among its various constituents, and how are they appropriated, accepted, inverted or abandoned? How do some ideals become commonplace, so much a part of life that their fabrication or artifice is naturalized? On the other hand, how do societies move to newer ideals, insert change in the midst of the mundane and the ordinary? While a discussion of the nature of historical sources falls outside the scope of this introduction, we would nonetheless like to note that a number of our sources, especially the textual ones, speak of ideal societies in order to construct them. Some are also concerned with ideologies, narratives structured in distinct ways to propagate specific agendas. The intertwining of myth, legend and history in our sources is

a particular challenge. Their untangling requires us to tease out the various strands in the narratives **(p.xix)** of the past, and pushes us to decipher how our contemporary notions of myth, legend, and history as distinct categories of analysis are not shared by our historical subjects. Coaxing sources to yield more than the obvious is a challenge to most historians, and by emphasizing practice we hope to point to our sensitivity towards the issue of sources and their interpretation in given social locales. This volume thus foregrounds both (Punjabi) cultures in practice and the practice or method of the scholar of Punjab. We turn now to contextualizing the latter—scholarship on the Punjab—by providing a historical and historiographical framework in which to locate the essays in this volume. But first, we think it critical to define our subject of study: what, after all, constitutes Punjab? Do its land, people, language (s), cultural practices, religious beliefs, and/or material cultures constitute the region? Or are these rather categories of representation, while the region is constituted by our imagination? Let us turn, then, to the fundamental question of territoriality.

Territoriality

The idea of Punjab—as is that of any region—is grounded in complex concepts of territoriality. While these concepts are perhaps as varied as those who hold them dear, we focus attention on three concepts of territoriality in particular. We identify these as the historical, the spatial, and the imaginary. While we disaggregate these concepts from one another in order to facilitate our discussion, it must be underscored at the outset that in practice, in the way that people identify with a region as a geographic/territorial entity and incorporate this into their notions of self—into their identity—these three aspects of territoriality easily meld into one another producing precisely the complexity of experience that the essays in this volume all point to.

Any understanding of Punjab's territoriality in historical terms is a complicated matter, not least because of a glaring anachronism common to both popular and scholarly treatments of the region. Namely, that the term Punjab emerged only in the late sixteenth century—in references to a *sarkar-i-Punjab* (the Government of Punjab) and a *suba-i-Punjab* (Punjab province) in Mughal documents²—yet it **(p.xx)** is used to refer to a geographic entity in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent (presumably a 'land of five rivers', from the literal translation of the Persian term) irrespective of the era under discussion. Even as careful a scholar as J.S. Grewal, whose research has been central to establishing the historicity of the term, has published such works as, *Social and Cultural History of the Punjab: Prehistoric, Ancient, and Early Medieval*.³ Undoubtedly, this anachronistic use of the term serves to reify the notion of a coherent region stretching back to time immemorial—a notion that must surely be interrogated rather than assumed. This is not to suggest, however, that historians have taken a static view of Punjab's territoriality. Rather, what is perhaps more evident in the existing scholarship is the recognition that embedded in the term from its earliest use is a relationship between a geographic entity—one that is taken to

be relatively stable—and administrative entities—whose contours have shifted over time. The latter sometimes map quite comfortably onto the former, and sometimes less so.

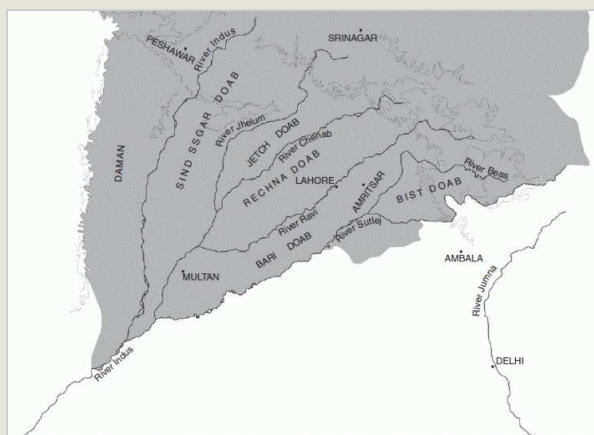
To engage with Punjab's territoriality in historical terms, thus, is to anchor the nebulous geographic entity Punjab in time and place: to give it concrete boundaries; to historicize it. Scholars do this most typically by identifying the contours of the various administrative and/or political entities that have constituted Punjab. In the process, they have shown that these administrative borders rarely map onto the geographical conception of Punjab as the land of the five rivers (or six rivers and five doabs, or interriverine tracts). To put this somewhat differently, what is most evident in this scholarly approach is that there is a clear 'idea of Punjab' in geographical terms against which historians (and other scholars) measure the administrative units. Thus, for example, although Mughal sources appear to use *suba-i-Lahore* and *sarkar-i-Punjab* synonymously, modern historians generally agree that the Mughal *suba* of Lahore *and* the northern parts of *suba* Multan *and* the western parts of *suba* Delhi, taken together, is likely a better representation of 'Punjab'.⁴ By the same token, despite the strong association of Sikh political power with Punjab, it is well recognized that Ranjit Singh's kingdom of Lahore does not map comfortably onto the geographic entity Punjab because after 1809 it did not include areas south of the Sutlej river and subsequently included parts of Jammu, Kashmir, and territories **(p.xxi)** across the Hindu Kush mountains (Kabul), all of which scholars take to be distinct from Punjab (Figure 1).⁵ What the disjuncture between actual administrative units and the latent notion of Punjab prevalent in scholarship reveals is, of course, that the latter—the idea of Punjab as a geographical entity—borrows heavily from modern, colonial territorial divisions (Figure 2). The influence of modern conceptions of Punjab in the assessment of all periods of Punjab history notwithstanding, British colonial Punjab itself is not coterminous with modern conceptions of Punjab in geographical terms, as outlined above. After all, the colonial entity included Peshawar, Leia, and Hazara at annexation in 1849, and Delhi and its environs were added to the province in 1858. Indeed, the history of colonial Punjab in territorial terms is one of constant remappings, the most dramatic of which is undoubtedly the vivisection of the province in 1947 into Indian and Pakistani halves. The postcolonial history of Indian Punjab has been no less unstable, with first the separation of the PEPSU states, then the creation of a new capital in the city of Chandigarh, and the subsequent trifurcation of the state in 1966 into Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh.

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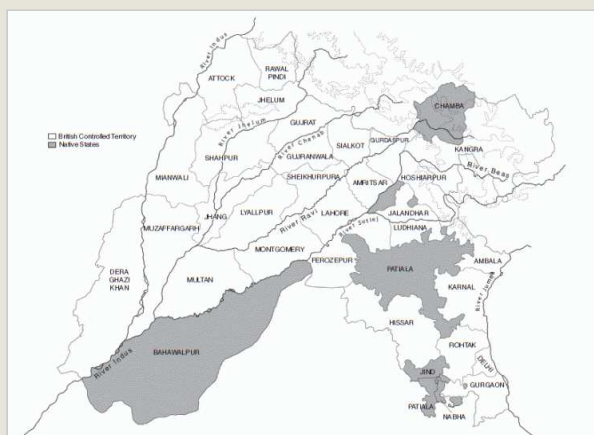
(p.xxiii) Despite these shifting contours of Punjab as an administrative entity, the essays in this volume do not focus so much on this territorial instability of the region as on the geographical stability of the ‘idea of Punjab’ as it has emerged in the modern period. Put another way, and as Farina Mir has argued elsewhere, despite the waxing and waning of Punjab’s administrative borders, ‘the Punjab has a geographical-cultural core... whether conceived as an axis connecting the major cities of Amritsar, Lahore, and Multan, or more broadly as the five *doabs* and the cis-Sutlej territory [the area to the south of the Sutlej river, up to Delhi].⁶ Indeed, this geographical-cultural core corresponds to the rather stable

—even if nebulous—notion of Punjab that is a subtext in discussions of the region’s territoriality. And it is this notion of Punjab’s territoriality that the essays in this volume engage more directly, rather than those of administrative borders. Having said that, the essays also show that this rather stable entity was not in any way insular or unconnected from the regions around it. In particular, the essays by Anshu Malhotra and Christopher Shackle point to the importance of cultural continuities with Sindh, to Punjab’s south-west. Both essays hint that these continuities may point to a cultural inheritance from Sindh, or at minimum Sindhi influence on Punjab’s literary culture—an influence that has to date been muted in scholarly understandings, at best.

If engaging with Punjab’s territoriality requires moving through history to see what this meant at different junctures, then it also requires moving through space. That is, the notion of Punjab explored in this volume extends study of the region to include not only the Punjab of the Indian subcontinent, whether early



Map of the Sikh Empire, 1839. Courtesy Farina Mir



Map of Colonial Punjab (post 1901). Courtesy Farina Mir

modern, colonial, Indian, or Pakistani Punjab, but also the places where the 'idea of Punjab' has travelled, and along with it ideas of Punjabiness. We conceptualize this expansion of scope as thinking about Punjab spatially, rather than simply in geographical terms. Thus, we include in this volume an essay by Tony Ballantyne on a particular Punjabi migrant experience—that of Sikhs who migrated from Punjab to Britain in the mid-twentieth century. Ballantyne's essay examines the construction of a Sikh identity in Britain in the latter half of the twentieth century, focusing on Sikh representations of themselves as a distinct community to the British state. This was a deliberate process, and as Ballantyne shows, it had certain outcomes that might **(p.xxiv)** be read as 'costs'. One, for example, was that it privileged a particular vision of Sikhism, marginalizing other voices, experiences, and representations of the faithful. Another was that it privileged a religious over a regional identity, thus providing little ground for inter-racial or inter-faith alliances that might have more effectively furthered Sikh political and socio-economic aims. While Ballantyne limits his analysis to the consequences of Sikh political action in the British context, we might add that to think of Punjab in these spatial terms—to ignore, as it were, boundaries or limits as identified on a map—is also to emphasize a recursivity between the Punjab and its diaspora, both historically and to this day. That is, the experience of Punjabi migrants has transported Punjab—as a set of ideas and practices—to other parts of the globe, and the diaspora has similarly played an important role in Punjab's (and India's) history. One need only think of the revolutionary nationalism of the Ghadar Party, started on the west coast of North America in the early twentieth century, or the significance of the diaspora in supporting the Khalistan movement, or the economic impact of migrant labor remittances on Punjab (both Indian and Pakistani) to recognize this recursivity.⁷

If Ballantyne's essay on the Sikh diaspora in Britain reminds us that we should not think of Punjab as isolated from other parts of the world, then Simona Sawhney's essay is crucial to understanding how changing conceptions of other parts of the world influence thinking in Punjab, both historically and today. Sawhney's essay seeks to juxtapose contemporary acts of public violence in Lahore with those of the nationalist figure Bhagat Singh and his comrades. It is a jarring contrast, no doubt, given the iconic status of Bhagat Singh as nationalist hero and the revulsion caused—certainly in liberal circles, but surely beyond, as well—by the depraved violence unleashed on Lahore's citizens in the past few years, particularly its religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya and the Shi'i. But Sawhney uses the juxtaposition to great effect. Her essay not only elucidates facets of Bhagat Singh's politics, but posits the significance of changing conceptions of the West between Bhagat Singh's time and our own. Among this essay's strengths is how it helps shape an understanding of local politics in the light of these conceptions, showing how the local and nationalist politics of the early twentieth century were **(p.xxv)** never insular, but rather interwoven with conceptions of the West that helped sustain them. The sad irony

is that the earlier politics of death and hope that she elucidates has largely become a politics of death alone.

To turn the discussion to the imaginary aspects of territoriality is only to make explicit what has thus far been implicit in this discussion. That is, as significant as administrative borders or lines drawn on maps—perhaps even more significant—is how Punjab figures in people’s imaginaries. Indeed, connections with the landscape seem critically important to Punjab’s inhabitants and to Punjab’s history, whether gauged through relationships to land within Punjab,⁸ or in the way that landscape is evoked when people move beyond its borders. David Gilmartin takes up the issue of the landscape in his discussion of the making of Pakistan and in particular Pakistani Punjab. As Gilmartin points out in the opening of his essay, ‘the creation of Pakistan has often been portrayed as a process peculiarly divorced from the history of the land that is today Pakistan’. Given the significance of land, literally and figuratively, to this event, this historiographical oversight is indeed astounding. In his essay, Gilmartin brings a history of the land into the historical narrative of colonial Punjab in new ways—in environmental terms, that is—and shows how changing relationships with the land, in conjunction with the new colonial dispensation, had resounding effects on Punjabi notions of self and community by transforming notions of *biradari* (brotherhood, kinship system, or descent group), a key facet of Punjab’s social organization.

If life on the land, and thus a relationship to it, was transformed for many during the colonial period, then colonialism’s end severed that relationship altogether for scores of people. The numbers are staggering and despite being well known are worth repeating: an estimated 12 million people were on the move in Punjab in the summer of 1947; that is 12 million people whose lives were severed from familiar places and landscapes. Yet, for many of Partition’s refugees, while the physical relationship with land/place was irrevocably lost, their ‘Punjab’ would live on in their imaginaries, and in the new worlds they constructed for themselves. One example of this is the names given to some of the refugee colonies of Delhi: **(p.xxvi)** ‘Gujranwala’, ‘Bhera’ or ‘Punjabi Bagh’. Another example is the persistent conversation opener posed to Punjabi settlers in Delhi, even 60-odd years on from Partition: ‘*tussi picchon kithon de ho?*’ (Where are you from [with clear reference to a ‘before’: *picchon*]?). Such imaginings extend beyond refugee communities, and are to be found in migrant communities the world over, whether marked in their restaurants (London’s plethora of ‘Lahore Kebab House (s)’, or New York’s ‘Lahore Deli’, for example), their sweet shops (London’s famous Ambala *mithai*-makers, for example), or their neighbourhoods (for instance, Vancouver’s ‘Punjabi Market’ area). In each case, an imaginary is at work that maps Punjab without giving credence to international borders either within the subcontinent or beyond it. While no single essay in this volume addresses itself to this imaginary, it is without doubt at play in all of the essays included herein. Indeed, it would not be pushing our point too far to suggest that

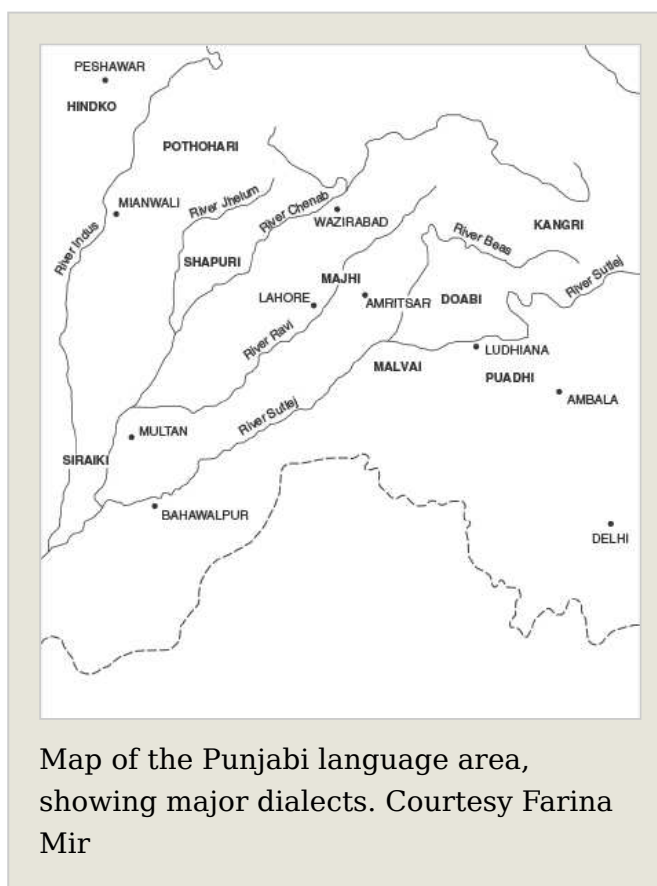
the region is constituted as much by people's limitless imaginaries as by the borders that define it on any map or the land that such representations signify.

Language and Literary Cultures

We argued above that Punjab has a geographical-cultural core, one that has been relatively stable compared to the shifting contours of the region in administrative terms. Undoubtedly, one of the key conceptual foundations of this cultural core is language. The relationship between region and language, however, is not entirely straightforward. To be sure, we are positing a relationship between Punjab (land) and Punjabi (language), and Punjabis (people). But we are keenly aware that it is a complicated one, and we attempt here to draw out some of that complexity as it relates to language.

We speak of Punjabi in the singular, but it is of course constituted as a language by a number of dialects. Linguists have mapped this out in technical detail, so we need not do so here.⁹ What is perhaps more helpful for the purposes of this volume is to think of Punjabi as a language constituted by a range of mutually intelligible dialects spoken in the area from the environs of Delhi to those of Peshawar, including (although not exclusively): Majhi, Siraiki, Malvai, Puadhi, **(p.xxvii)**

Kangri, Doabi, Hindko, Pothohari, Dogri, and Lahnda (Figure 3).¹⁰ This definition allows us to see the cultural continuities that mark this area without imposing too singular a view of the language (s) spoken there. One sees this approach taken, in some ways, by Christopher Shackle in his essay, 'Punjabi Sufi Poetry from Farid to Farid', where while recognizing dialectical differences between the compositions of various authors—most notably the Farids of the title, Baba Farid (d. 1265) and Khwaja Ghulam Farid (1845-1901)—Shackle draws them into a single tradition, that of Punjabi Sufi poetry. Shackle's essay is self-consciously revisionist, seeking to question a dominant paradigm **(p.xxviii)** in the scholarship on Punjabi Sufi poetry established by Lajwanti Rama Krishna in her 1938 publication, *Punjabi Sufi Poets*, that posits a rise and fall of Sufi poetry and casts Sufis 'as religiously universalized exponents of a shared pre-modern Indian spiritual understanding'. In



Map of the Punjabi language area, showing major dialects. Courtesy Farina Mir

contrast, Shackle argues for an era of vibrant Sufi literary production that ranges from the late-twelfth century Sufi Baba Farid to the late-nineteenth century Sufi Khwaja Ghulam Farid. More importantly, perhaps, he recontextualizes their literature away from Krishna's emphasis on its 'universalism inspired by the monism of Vedanta' by arguing that it is critical to see this literature in its Islamic context. This is not, of course, to deny that Punjabi Sufi poetry had a profound impact beyond Sufi and Muslim circles, or that there could be 'theological equivalences' between Vedantic monism and certain Sufi ideas, as Malhotra discusses in her essay in this volume. Rather, it is to suggest that we be more attentive to the context in which Punjabi Sufi poetry was produced. Shackle's essay not only does this, but also posits an argument for why the Islamic context of Punjabi Sufi poetry's production became opaque, suggesting that it was the result of Punjabi Sufi poets and their poetry being appropriated in the modern period to contemporary political exigencies. Shackle's essay is an important reminder that in examining a regional literature, we do not want to collapse important distinctions that were germane to the context of its production. Thus, without undermining the notion of a regional literature, we can recognize distinct strands within that tradition. We can suggest, thus, that between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries two distinct literary traditions emerged in Punjab. One was of the Sufis, who expressed their mystical experience in poetry that deployed the dominant Punjabi dialects Majhi and Multani. By using symbols and metaphors in their poetry that were steeped in the practices of everyday life—such as the spinning wheel, a prospective bride collecting her dowry, or popular characters from Punjab's ubiquitous *qisse* (epic stories/romances), such as Hir and Ranjha—Sufis produced an emotional connection with their listeners. The other was the Sikh tradition, which from the time of Guru Nanak had turned to the *nirguni* bhakti that was spreading across north India for spiritual inspiration and sustenance. The languages of this universalist bhakti, Sant Bhasha and later Braj, **(p.xxix)** were the preferred modes of transmission of Sikh literature.¹¹ There were, nevertheless, many points of intersection between the two, whether the mode of 'masquerading' in feminine voice adopted by male poets when addressing the beloved (God),¹² the use of bridal mysticism, or the presence of Baba Farid's poetry in the *Adi Granth*. Indeed, Shackle, who in his essay briefly explores the historical and literary problems of the Farid verses in the *Adi Granth* is more aware than most of the complex relationship between the two traditions, being one of the few scholars to have worked on both.

As the discussion above suggests, Punjabi linguistic and literary cultures are marked by pluralities. They are also marked by ironies, not least of which is their relationship to the state. Members of all of Punjab's religious communities—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian—speak Punjabi, and have done so historically. Although it has been a vibrant vernacular tradition since the time of Baba Farid, Punjabi has never enjoyed state support. Mughal rulers reinforced the policy of their Sultanate predecessors to use Persian as the administrative language in the areas where Punjabi was spoken, a practice continued by Mughal successor

states, including Ranjit Singh's early nineteenth-century kingdom. While the colonial period should have seen the adoption of Punjabi as the language of administration in colonial Punjab because of colonial language policy, the colonial state chose to use Urdu as the official language in its stead.¹³ Part of the colonial rationale for not using Punjabi was the plurality of its scripts (Indo-Persian, Gurmukhi, and Devnagari), none of which dominated. While the use of Devnagari for Punjabi was relatively rare in the nineteenth century (or before or since), Indo-Persian and Gurmukhi were both so common that neither could easily be adopted over the other. Each of these scripts was also implicated in language-community claims by the latter half of the nineteenth century, which further complicated the issue (Indo-Persian-Muslim; Gurmukhi-Sikh; Devnagari-Hindu). If the absence of state patronage meant little in the way of the standardization of modern Punjabi (it might be noted that most modern Indian vernaculars were standardized through their relationship with the colonial state), then the late-nineteenth century context of communal claims on language (s) sealed its fate in this regard. **(p.xxx)**

Vernacular languages were politicized in new ways in the late nineteenth century that had implications for Punjabi as a ground for cross-communal ethno-linguistic claims. Sikh reformers, particularly those associated with the Singh Sabha (a Sikh socio-religious organization established in 1873), promoted Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script as the language of Sikh aspirations. Similarly, at about the same time—the 1880s—Hindus, particularly those associated with the Arya Samaj (a Hindu reform movement established in 1875), sought to bring the Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan triumvirate that animated United Province politics to bear on Punjab politics. Muslims too played their part in these partisan politics. Thus, we see petitions in the late nineteenth century from Muslim organizations to the colonial state advocating for Urdu as 'their' language. One such example is provided by the Anjuman-i-Hamdardi Islamiya, which petitioned the Hunter Commission in 1882 to maintain Urdu as the official language of Punjab.¹⁴ This political terrain produced a number of ironies, some of which surface in the essays in this volume. Simona Sawhney's essay, for example, points to the tension between Bhagat Singh's advocacy for Hindi and his simultaneous conviction in the emotive power of Punjabi for its speakers. Although exploring this latter point is beyond the scope of Sawhney's essay, it nonetheless reminds us that despite the divisive terrain of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century language politics, the affinity of Punjabi speakers for their language remained vital.

Alyssa Ayres's essay follows a different set of ironies around language, these in postcolonial Pakistan, where despite Punjabi dominance of the Pakistani state, Punjabi is the only major regional language in Pakistan with no official status. Ayres focuses her attention on what she terms a '*Punjabiya* movement', which she defines as 'seeking to "restore" a role for Punjabi, justified entirely in terms of aesthetics and pursued through the development of a respected Punjabi-

language written public sphere'. Ayres helps us understand what is at stake in this movement, which defies the logics of the usual explanation for language movements: nationalism. As Ayres rightly points out, the arbiters of this movement enjoy political power and influence, suggesting that this is not their motivation. She provides a sophisticated analysis that relies on notions of **(p.xxxi)** symbolic capital. Ayres focuses specifically on Pakistani Punjab, but her argument has relevance for a broader cross-border perspective, in at least two specific ways. First, it underscores the affective ties that undergird for many a relationship to Punjabi despite the minimal state space accorded to it in much of its postcolonial history. Put somewhat differently, despite the absence of any official status for Punjabi in Pakistan and the divisive language politics that wracked Indian Punjab in the aftermath of independence until the state was further partitioned in 1966, Punjabi continues to have immense emotive power for its speakers in both countries, and for migrants from Punjab—and often their descendants—the world over. Second is a countervailing trend. Namely, that in the contemporary period there has been an impact of the absence of state support and the instrumental advantages of other languages—whether Urdu in Pakistan, Hindi in India, or English in both countries; for some the ties of language are indeed eroding. Thus, the Punjabi movement that Ayres documents in Pakistan is one that has never enjoyed widespread popular support. Similarly, one can note that in places like Delhi, young urbane professionals today are less likely to be proficient in Punjabi than their parents' and grandparents' generations. This, however, seems not to undermine their identity as Punjabi. Thus, we might posit that while the link between language and territory was surely critical to establishing Punjabi subjectivity historically, it is not necessarily constitutive of all contemporary Punjabi experience.

Colonialism in Punjab

Interrogating the idea of Punjab becomes particularly salient if we consider how historians have engaged with Punjabi history, particularly its modern period. It is perhaps not surprising that the workings of the colonial state—its administrative and technological innovations, for example—and the sheer power of its imperial interventions in Punjab have been a mainstay of postcolonial history writing on the region. As a people still coming to terms with the short but transformative hundred years of colonial history and its consequences, it was imperative to examine how the colonial state had instituted **(p.xxxii)** its power. The peculiarities of the paternalistic 'Punjab School' of administration were understood and explained in terms of the colonial state seeing Punjab as the last bastion of conquest, and the colonial rulers' paranoia of being hemmed in by a turbulent frontier and the designs of powers beyond it.¹⁵

An important element of the colonial state's Punjab project, if we can call it that, was to recognize/shape the 'tribal' character of the province's 'agricultural classes' and to nurture them as the 'natural' leaders of Punjabi society, both of which were to the disadvantage of *kirars*, moneylenders, and traders, most of

whom were Hindu.¹⁶ The colonial state did this through legal and administrative structures that had a profound impact on Punjabi society. Two interventions that stand out in particular are the division of Punjabis into 'agricultural' and 'non-agricultural' tribes and the application of 'customary law' for all Punjabis.¹⁷ Generally viewing Punjabi land-owning Jats (and Rajputs) as a flat, seamless category of middle-ranking peasants encouraged such policies.¹⁸ Indeed, the colonial understanding of caste in Punjab viewed it as a system of ranking social hierarchy, one that pertained to social customs and purity/pollution taboos in particular. These customs and taboos were thought to have less traction among Punjab's Jats—something belied by contemporary scholarship, including Oberoi's essay in this volume—than among its urban mercantile classes; it was these urban mercantilists who were seen to preserve the ideals of caste.¹⁹ In other words, notions of agricultural/non-agricultural, tribe/caste became foundational to colonial policies in Punjab. Among the consequence of such categorization was the enactment at the *fin de siècle* of the Punjab Land Alienation Act which proscribed 'urban castes/classes' from owning agricultural land. In sum, the consequences of these policies were that they favoured the land-owning castes and classes over urban professional and trading ones.

The workings of the British Raj then—its apparently limitless power to intervene and change things—whether in taming nature by creating the famous irrigation canals or in compartmentalizing people through their census and other ethnological/ethnographical logics have received due attention.²⁰ This research continues to be significant, even as newer research further unravels the workings of **(p.xxxiii)** colonial institutions such as the police and the army or dismantles the apparently monolithic structure of the colonial state.²¹ While disaggregating the colonial state and, increasingly, looking beyond it through histories grounded in social and cultural perspectives, there are significant ways in which these two impact areas of Punjab historiography—that is, the state's attempt at socio-legal restructuring and its will to refashion the landscape—have come together as well.

In this context, David Gilmartin's essay in this volume is important for linking the power of the colonial state and its transformative capacities to cultural changes that came to define the new rural elites. He draws on earlier research to show how the colonial state produced an immense ecological transformation of Punjab through technological innovation specifically, in creating the irrigation canals.²² The drive for increasing agricultural productivity and thus revenues was linked to marginalizing and criminalizing the pastoral/semi-pastoral communities of western Punjab. Gilmartin notes the tensions between the settled agriculturists and the pastoralists of Punjab and underlines the role of Sufi *pirs* (saints/mystics) as intermediaries between the two. The pious *pirs*, as Richard Eaton's articles on Baba Farid's establishment at Pakpattan have shown, played a crucial role in the gradual Islamization and settling of these areas.²³

Subsequently, the sacred genealogies emanating from them became the foundation for and affirmed the power of local families of substance.

Under colonialism the new rural elite, guided by the state's moral universalism that emphasized private property and individual responsibility, came to rework genealogy as the fluid notion of biradari. While contractual law structured dealings in property, customary law came to organize patterns of inheritance and other matters that fell in the domain of personal law in large parts of colonial India. Besides nurturing a loyal rural elite, these changes also created a more patriarchal society. With the state's insistence on the division between agricultural and non-agricultural classes with the implementation of the Land Alienation Act in 1900, sharp cleavages between the favoured rural elite and the urban non-agricultural elite came into play, as demonstrated above. Rural low class/caste tenants, labourers and artisans, and women were **(p.xxxiv)** also losers in this peculiar social engineering. Gilmartin traces the impact of this policy in the cultural adoption and adaptation of biradari, and the manner in which it came to define social and political relations in colonial and contemporary Pakistani Punjab. The tensions between Punjabi cultural identity and the developmental policies of the Pakistani state, or between the Islamist *shari'at* laws and skepticism about their need, in Gilmartin's view, can be partially traced to the rural elite's social investment in the idea of biradari. Through the subtle shifts in the social institution of this idea in the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, Gilmartin demonstrates how we might understand society through cultural transitions.

The collusion between the colonial state and indigenous elites that Gilmartin illustrates through his analysis of the working of the concept of biradari has been taken up by feminist historians, who have shown its particularly detrimental effects on women. Though Gilmartin's essay only hints at the hardships women had to face due to the patriarchal institutions that were constructed under colonialism, others have demonstrated the very real losses that women suffered. The process of codification of customary laws, for instance, in which the state and patriarchal elites collaborated, actively worked against women's usufructuary and other rights on land. Prem Chowdhry has shown the effects that usurping women's rights had on the widows of landed Jats,²⁴ while Veena Oldenburg has elucidated long-term changes in the institution of dowry against the background of new revenue demands and the freezing of patriarchally-informed customary laws.²⁵ The changes in rural Punjabi society in the colonial period thus remain a significant area of interest. Although the essays in this volume do not directly address how historical change impacted women per se, much of the work presented here obviously owes a debt of gratitude to this feminist scholarship, and many of the essays are sensitive to the changing contexts and expressions of patriarchy and gender relations.

The historiography of modern Punjab thus has given a fair degree of attention to the structures and institutions of the colonial state, particularly for their role in making a rural elite. It has also focused **(p.xxxv)** attention on this rural elite, showing for example how it participated and dominated the politics of the province in the early twentieth century through webs of patronage and the workings of the Unionist Party.²⁶ The process of urbanization, however, or the characteristics of urban classes have received much less attention. The impact of the British Raj on urban areas was in fact enormous, in Punjab as across British India, as a growing body of scholarship has shown.²⁷ But this scholarship has mostly focused on capital cities—both of presidencies and provinces. Urban history, particularly in the Punjab context, is still in a nascent phase, and despite the strides made, much is still to be done.²⁸ We know little about the travails of the urban poor, for example, and not much about the middle classes either. Though some historians working on changing gender relations have drawn attention to the new demands of domesticity among the emerging upper caste, middle classes—speaking of the newly envisaged appropriate roles for women, and the disciplining required in the ostensibly emancipatory programmes of education that centrally shaped the middle classes or exposed its anxieties—other aspects that defined middle class-ness have received far less attention.²⁹ One exception is perhaps the over-explored area of the communalizing of the middle classes, to which we will turn our attention shortly. Markus Daechsel's work therefore marks something of a departure, and his essay here carries forward his earlier writing on the self-expression of the Urdu middle class of late colonial Punjab.³⁰

Daechsel examines the remarkable division between the agricultural/non-agricultural classes mentioned above to show how in Punjab this pushed some classes away from investing in land. However, the relationship of the middle class to commercial or industrial ventures remained tenuous, with high-risk financial institutions flopping more often than succeeding, as Daechsel's brief sketches of some of the representatives of this class illustrate. Daechsel notes the dependence of the middle classes on patronage from both rural elites and the state. Middle-class education programmes, even its reformism as seen in the various *anjumans* (associations) that constituted a defining aspect of urban life or the printing presses that shaped debates in the public sphere, remained captured by key elitist patrons who imposed cultural norms in the 'micro-fabric' of middle class life. It is **(p.xxxvi)** in the changing relationship of the middle class to material objects—its consumerism—that Daechsel discerns a class coming into its own. He argues that as the middle class changed its relationship from use-value of material objects to a more confident consumption of sign-objects between the two World Wars, a more self-assured class took birth.

If Daechsel looks at middle-class culture, then William Glover shifts attention to another dimension of urban life. His essay examines the meanings congealed in the term 'public space' and the relationship between Punjabi publics and the

spatial use of the corporeal city once municipal committees were established in 1862. Tracing the specific understanding of the term 'public space' from its western European usage in the medieval period, Glover shows the particular ways in which municipalities employed the term in Punjab (as elsewhere in colonial India). Though in the pre-colonial period there were spaces in the city that were accessible to almost all of its residents, spaces that were in many ways physically similar to what the colonial government would call 'public' urban space, the change in the situation, according to Glover, was in the instituting and strict implementation of new laws and rules that defined how public space could be used. Glover traces for us in Punjab a more general colonial phenomenon: how colonial authorities interpreted the density and filth of indigenous Indian cities as symptomatic of social malaise. His intervention, however, is to draw our attention to the concomitant emphasis on transforming public spaces to engineer a socio-cultural change among the denizens of the city. Once again, the ambitions of Punjab's colonial administration are laid bare. The most exciting aspect of Glover's essay is his reading of legal cases from nineteenth-and twentieth-century Punjab where he analyses how the term 'public' was applied to the spatial use of the city. Glover speaks of the 'translation' of the language of 'public', and therefore the contestation over the use of 'public space' among Punjabis. He points to the increasingly sophisticated manner in which Punjabis imbibed, transmuted and re-deployed the term 'public', with its baggage of rules, delineating the complex processes that shaped the cityscape in the colonial period. By showcasing Daechsel's and Glover's essays, we point to the exciting new research on Punjab's cities, their **(p.xxxvii)** physical appearance and material cultures, and the classes who inhabited, transformed and consumed the city.

Religious Identities in Punjab

As Daechsel notes, and as other writings on the reformist middle classes have underscored, existing studies depict these classes as deeply divided along religious lines. This historiographical representation is to an extent a discourse of Partition, an event that has encouraged writing about Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as if they were self-contained communities with little interaction and intermingling, even though they lived in the same region and grappled with the same forces of economic, social, and political change. The emphasis on religious community and identity is surely grounded in scholars' desire to reflect the long term or deep-rooted 'communal' antipathies that created purportedly rigid and separate communities of Punjab. Without a sense of such a history, after all, partition and its accompanying violence and the brutal uprooting of peoples would seem a mystery condemned to be in the shadow of either atavistic animalism or elided by pinning the blame on a few hate-inciting figures.

An examination of the historiography of Punjab reveals that scholarly energy has been devoted not so much to cultural history, but much more to the cultural fault lines in Punjabi society, concentrating on moments of rupture. We know why/how

religious antagonisms became entrenched in society, but less about mental states, for example, that encouraged the shared veneration of saintly lives.³¹ We know how different religious communities came to see themselves as distinct from each other, and how soured relations between them sowed the seeds of an irrevocable political parting of ways. Indeed, these processes have garnered so much attention that one might wonder, is there more to Punjabi culture/s than antagonistic religious identities? Is there more to religious identities than acrimony and debate?

While we hope to demonstrate the relevance of these latter questions in the pages of this volume, there is no getting away from the divisive consequences of sectarian politics. And, despite over a half century of interrogation into communalism—often, however, with **(p.xxxviii)** a telos to Partition—much work is yet to be done. The enlarged discursive fields in which religious communities were constructed and the insidious ways in which refashioned religious rituals and symbols became hegemonic, for example, must be better understood. We do not wish to deny the ramifications of conflict, nor leave it unaccounted for. However, we wish to underscore two points. First, that religious conflict/communalism was always coterminous with a thriving cultural world where religious difference—however contentious in some spheres—did not inhibit common, shared praxis in others. Punjab historiography, buttressed by the broader work of many of the contributors to this volume, is illustrating this with increasing efficacy. The challenge that our historiography has yet to take up effectively, however, is to push beyond understanding communalism and Punjabin as parallel phenomena, and to interrogate the ways in which they may be imbricated in one another, and how they together produce modern Punjab.³² Second, that there was no teleological one-way street built into identity politics leading inevitably to the partition of the subcontinent; the politics of the late colonial period were always contingent. Thus, we argue for examining the ‘processual’ and ‘in-the-making’ aspects of identity politics, which in effect give any society the possibilities of multitudinous trajectories. Put another way, to understand the reach of religion in shaping lives and cultures without obsessively relating this to the deployment of communal identities in arenas of politics is critical to how religious identities and cultures are studied in this volume.

The colonial period in Punjab was a turbulent one, and seminal studies have focused on this era as a time when the language and form of religious discourse were forever changed. After all, this was the time when various organizations and movements including the Arya Samaj, the Singh Sabhas, the Ahmadiyya, and numerous Muslim anjumans emerged, all composed of elites eager to gain space and recognition in the new public sphere.³³ The logic of their social and cultural politics depended on mustering and maintaining the support of their ‘cadres’, engaging in bellicose rhetoric, the discursive domains of which have been well documented and analysed. The impetus of this research is far from

over, and as we continue to grapple with religious and ethnic conflicts in South Asia—whether of our **(p.xxxix)** own making or those received as a legacy of the colonial state—its momentum is not likely to abate.

C.S. Adcock's essay in this regard disturbs and unsettles some of the given assumptions about the nature of public discourse and the ostensibly entrenched positions that various reform and political organizations were committed to. She questions the assumed linkages often made by historians between the Arya Samaj of the late nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth centuries to Hindu nationalism as it grew after the 1920s.³⁴ The framing of the debate on communalism by the Indian National Congress in terms of 'Hindu Tolerance', that is, Hinduism as a 'tolerant' religion that did not condone proselytization, as against the attack on Muslims by Hindu nationalists in this matter, had significant consequences in polarizing public debate. The representation of the early twentieth century by historians in similar terms—the continuum between the Arya Samaj and Hindu nationalism—has obscured important moments in the Arya Samaj's history. One of these, for example, is that of the Arya Samaj struggling to live up to its ideals of reform on caste.³⁵

Adcock brings a new perspective to scholarship on the Arya Samaj's *shuddhi* programme—the proselytizing that earned the Samaj the dubious tag of indulging in 'semiticism'—by foregrounding the point of view of those who chose to be 'purified' and 'converted'. Shifting attention away from *shuddhi* as a Hindu-Muslim question, Adcock highlights issues of dalit identity instead. This is a particularly compelling approach given that the 'dalit question', as it were, was at this time agitating reformers, nationalists and the 'low' castes themselves.³⁶ She shows how 'untouchability' and Dayananda Sarasvati's idea of caste based on merit—the Vedic universalism of the Samaj—was often raised by converts. The continuum between Muslims, untouchables and women as the other(s) of the upper-caste Hindu male that her essay hints at opens up important questions about those who claimed the nation. The careers of some of the polemicists and controversialists she discusses ironically also point to the fluidity of identities in so far as many of them changed the religions and reform organizations they supported frequently enough to render meaningless the idea of loyalty to any given identity; or, to think of this a little differently, it demonstrates the accumulation of multiple identities. **(p.xl)** The 'performance' of controversy—given that conversion theatricals were geared towards attracting public attention—and by implication the 'performance' of identity in the public sphere of colonial north India opened the question of identity to public moods, scrutiny and participation. Conversion as a form of dissent and as creating novel situations and rituals of belonging emerged as an arena for commenting on society itself.³⁷ In the context of Punjab, then, uncomfortable questions are raised: were genuine moments that could have re-defined Punjabi attitudes towards the dalit question not capitalized upon by their ostensible supporters? Was the 'communal' issue more complex than the assumption of straightforward

loyalties of defined communities/religiosities that we assume? To what extent did it become imperative for dalits to define their identity in their own terms—whether through their ‘traditional’ religion or by instituting or appropriating newer identities such as Ad Dharmi, Valmiki Sabha, Buddhist, and Christian?³⁸

A salient contribution of this volume are essays that examine the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, opening up key concepts like ‘religion’ or ‘community’ or ‘piety’ for careful interrogation in the pre-colonial and early colonial periods. Can the European Enlightenment’s universalizing of religion, and the importation of that idea in the colonies be held responsible for obscuring indigenous traditions that grasped and performed religiosity in different ways?³⁹ Did the stance of the ‘Orientalists’, with their focus on textual traditions create a warped understanding of Indian religious phenomena? Was ‘Hinduism’ never studied on its own terms, marking as different the colonized and their religious expression from their imperial rulers?⁴⁰ The essays highlighted below show the local lineages of holy men and regional traditions that so significantly defined people’s relationship to the sacred. They also illuminate the interlocution, appropriation and intermeshing with the greater Indic traditions that created the templates on which the local was inscribed. The idea of a community was also undoubtedly present, but what made the community distinct was a much more complex process than the categories Hindu, Muslim or Sikh allow for. In other words, it might be more useful to look at society in relational terms, marking out distinctions not in sharp cleavages but in chains of connectedness.

(p.xli) One example of such a palimpsest would be the new state structure of the Sikhs, built on the political and statist imaginary fed by the culturally hegemonic Mughal state. Another would be the reach and play of the Pauranic mythologies to understand and experience the world. Alternatively we can speak of the sheer power of the holy personage in Punjab disbursing sacred charisma on the temporal or spiritual efforts of humans. This could be a *sant* or a *pir*, a living guru or a human conduit carrying forward saintly *baraka* (grace), performing salutary and obligatory miracles, affirming life and its course for most Punjabis.

The study of the Kukas by Harjot Oberoi, and the Gulabdasi sect by Anshu Malhotra, point to ways in which the guru lineages (a parallel tradition being the veneration of the pirs) played an important part in expressing piety in this region. Though these essays also affirm the notion of Hindu, Sikh and Musalman/Turak in Punjabi society, they are circumspect about using them as self-evident categories. Oberoi depicts the centrality of the purity/pollution binary for the millenarian Kukas (though they rejected the caste system) who literally invested everything to maintain the symbolic purity of the cow. The attack on the butchers of first Amritsar, then Raikot, and finally an apocalyptic moment at Malerkotla in 1872 was not a case of ‘religious riot’ that we have become familiar with in the colonial chronicles from the end of the nineteenth century, but symptomatic of a state of anomie for the Kuka protectors of the cow.

It was the *mlechha* (impure; barbarian) British with their increasing tolerance for cow-slaughter that forced the hand of the Kukas, who rose against the destruction of what they held to be inviolable. The Kukas drew inspiration from the miracle-making guru Ram Singh, proximity to his physical presence and the power of his teachings. The guru himself freely borrowed, adapted and internalized from the Sikh tradition, whose imagined pristine past he wished to recreate.

While the Kukas were keen on drawing boundaries in their own way and distinguishing between the sacred and the profane, the Gulabdasis seemingly welcomed all to their *dera* (establishment). These included men and women, persons of all religions, the high castes and the low. Malhotra shows how the charisma of the **(p.xlii)** guru was important in this rather literary sect whose last decades, as those of the Kukas, intersected with the colonial period. It was guru Gulabdas's particular interpretation of Vedantic monism that encouraged the openness of the sect that apparently embraced all. Malhotra re-explores the concept of 'syncretism' to demonstrate the manner in which specific appropriations from bhakti, Sufi and Sikh traditions created the multiple inheritances that the sect revelled in.

Taking a slightly different approach, Mir looks at another instantiation of the overlaps between bhakti, Sufi, and Sikh traditions in her essay on Punjabi popular narratives. Mir's main focus is on the representation of saint veneration within Punjabi qisse, and *Hir-Ranjha* in particular. Through an analysis of a number of late-nineteenth century *Hir-Ranjha* texts, she argues that saint veneration is consistently represented as both a legitimate and a preferred form of religious devotion. By historicizing these texts and their popularity, Mir argues for their significance as historical sources, and as representations of contemporary popular attitudes. In contemplating how best to analyse this discourse and the historical practices it signifies, she argues for thinking of it as a regional form of piety. Indeed, she argues that this is more helpful in thinking about questions of religious identity in late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Punjab than the concept of syncretism, a concept that Malhotra finds helpful for the same historical context.

Despite Malhotra's invocation of syncretism and its value for analytical purposes, that is not to suggest that her reading of the Gulabdasi sect shies away from interrogating what might be described metaphorically as discordant notes in the sect's history. She attempts to decipher these discordant notes as they emerge from the Gulabdasi Piro's writings, which underline Hindu-Turak (as Muslims are referred to in the contemporary literature) differentiation, on the face of it a strange juxtaposition in a sect known for subversions of orthodoxies. Piro's putative 'conversion' from a Muslim to a Gulabdasi (Sikh/Hindu) neophyte is a reminder that 'conversions', whether in the pre-colonial or the colonial periods, demonstrated both the fluidity of identities as they also

became occasions for plugging the porosity of community borders. Inclusiveness and distancing were intrinsically part of the enterprise of crossing religious-cultural borders. **(p.xliii)** Oberoi's and Malhotra's essays also link up with Adcock's essay on the important issue of the low castes and untouchables of Punjab. While Oberoi shows that the Kukas had a number of Jat followers,⁴¹ Guru Ram Singh was from the artisanal Tarkhan caste and there were other 'low' caste disciples. On the other hand, though Gulabdas was himself a Jat, sources show that his sect had many low caste and untouchable followers.⁴² This fluidity tells us something about the intellectual, social, and religious subject positions available to some low castes in nineteenth-century Punjab. Despite the polemical dimensions the 'untouchability' question acquired in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, as Adcock shows, we know that these social spaces continued to exist. The continuous histories of the Namdharis (Kukas) and the Gulabdasis to our present times indicate that, even though the sects may have changed in varied ways over time. The present flaring up of Sikh/Ravidasi/dalit identity issues, clustered around various popular deras in Indian Punjab and in the diaspora, point to the need to examine the history of these older deras, which could scupper and subvert given ritual and social hierarchies of Punjabi society.

Two more essays in this volume further complicate our understanding of how community and religious identity came to be experienced and addressed in the eighteenth century. Discussing the specific genre of history writing within the Sikh tradition, the *Gurbilas* literature, they attempt to unravel how the notion of a Sikh community was constructed and built. Before we take these up for discussion, a few preliminary words about the flourishing discipline of 'Sikh Studies' will help in apprehending them.

Sikh Studies and Questions of Identity

Demographic, political and cultural factors have considerably influenced the growth of Sikh Studies. The second Partition of Punjab, in 1966, created an Indian state in which Sikhs constituted upwards of sixty per cent of the population, a demographic shift that changed forever the status of Sikhs from a small minority in colonial Punjab (a mere 7 per cent according to the 1891 census)⁴³ to a conspicuous majority. The success of the Green Revolution in Punjab in **(p.xliv)** the 1960s and the 1970s made it one of the most prosperous states of India. Academic life in Indian Punjab developed apace with at least three large universities, in Chandigarh, Patiala, and Amritsar. While much of the research produced at these sites assumed—as it contributed to—the idea of a Sikh nation, equally important was scholarship that examined or projected the history of a region.⁴⁴ The tension between these two projects—Sikh history and Punjabi history—was particularly acute during the Khalistan movement in the early 1980s, which demanded for itself a history of Sikh nationhood.⁴⁵

Other tensions and opportunities have also influenced the field of Sikh Studies. One of these, for example, is the massive emigration from Punjab from the late nineteenth century which created a need for host communities to incorporate this diaspora in what have often been evolving discourses on multiculturalism. The large migrations from the Sikh community, and its success in terms of both economic well-being and integration in host societies—the latter demonstrated by Ballantyne in this volume—has meant a significant presence and growth of Sikh Studies in Western academia. In recent years the discipline has engaged in debates about Sikh identity and opened questions about the perennial ambivalence of identities and the state of flux in which they are constantly negotiated.⁴⁶ The discipline has encouraged a range of research into the pre-modern period, spurred on in the first instance by locating and studying texts and manuscripts associated with the gurus.⁴⁷

Gurinder Singh Mann makes a critical intervention in precisely such scholarship, as well as in the broader analysis of Sikh Studies in his essay, 'Guru Nanak's Life and Legacy: A Reappraisal'. Here, Mann focuses attention of scholarship on the first Guru, in particular, assessing the state of scholarship on this seminal figure in Sikh and Punjabi (and Indian) history, and uses this as an opportunity to explore the future possibilities of research in the broader field of Sikh Studies. His essay provides a reconsideration of the foundational work of W.H. McLeod and suggests the ways it has perhaps unduly influenced Sikh scholarship decisively. While cognizant of McLeod's significant achievements both within and for the field of Sikh Studies, Mann is nonetheless willing to underscore the **(p.xlv)** interpretive strategies or paths that McLeod's scholarship foreclosed; he, in turn, presents us with a glimpse of those that he sees as most vital to an understanding of the Sikh religion and Sikh social history. Two of Mann's revisionist stances are of particular note. First, based upon his reading of the earliest Sikh scriptures, Mann overturns the traditional quietist image of Nanak to present him as an energetic and self-conscious religious and social institution builder. Second, he asserts that the Jats, and some artisanal castes, were an important component of the earliest Sikh community under Nanak, in contrast to the scholarly consensus that Jats entered the Sikh fold in large numbers only in the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ Mann's analyses, thus, nudges historians to re-examine the given contours of Sikh history. At minimum, he opens up the question of re-assessing important phases in Sikh history: the role of various gurus in building the Sikh community; and the complex interplay between Punjab's political, social and cultural histories and Sikh history. Different genres of Sikh literature—the *janam-sakhis*, *rahit-namas*, the gurbilas eulogies, as well as the various recensions of the Adi Granth—allow for a careful analysis of the evolving dynamics of the Sikh community. Some will surely find Mann's analysis provocative, as they may his prescriptions for future research. We see his essay as marking our contemporary moment as both a crucial and transformative juncture—one in which we can both take stock of the past and look forward to

the future—in the field of Sikh Studies, rife with possibilities as a new generation of scholars enter the field and new institutional spaces are garnered for the study of Sikh and Punjabi history.

Among the many accomplishments of Sikh Studies as a field is the way it has complicated our understanding of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, particularly through scholarship that has highlighted the power of the Khalsa—as an idea, an incipient organization, and as an imperial *darbar* (court).⁴⁹ Sometimes the intimate relationship between the history of the Sikhs and its historians, contemporary as well as those of earlier generations, has also led to more polemical efforts to exhibit a continuous history of Sikh ‘nationhood’, its locus apparently embedded in old manuscripts, but also dressed in newer nationalist sensibilities. **(p.xlvi)** However, as research has become more sophisticated, particularly in its examination of what went into the making of Sikh senses of the self, the Sikh community’s relationship to its past has also become more nuanced.

Louis Fenech in this volume studies the complex and fascinating history of the *Zafar-namah* (Epistle of Victory) attributed to the tenth guru Gobind Singh. Dismissing the banality of questions that try to establish whether the tenth guru did/did not, could/could not have written the *Zafar-namah*, or whether he would have entered into a dialogue with the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Fenech is more interested in the history of the *Zafar-namah* itself. Fenech simultaneously unpacks the manner in which Gobind Singh’s court and his literary composition can be placed within what he calls a ‘larger South Asian Islamicate’ culture, and how over time the text came to stand for the guru in the Sikh imagination. From what was purportedly the guru’s letter to the emperor, this text’s transition and transformation into sacred writing, and its emplacement within the *Dasam Granth* is the unfolding story of Sikh subjectivity and selfhood. Fenech’s adept handling of diverse sources, drawing out the contours of the Perso-Islamic heritage of north India even as he shows how a sense of Sikh community was born, enriches our understanding of this period as it does of Sikh identity.

In a similar vein, Anne Murphy examines Kuir Singh’s *Gurbilas Patshahi Das* and delves into the larger Pauranic mythological world that animated this genre of literature, showing at the same time the interpretive load a term like ‘community’ carried in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. Focusing on Kuir Singh’s portrayal of the martyrdom of the ninth guru Tegh Bahadur, Murphy too weaves her discussion around the persistent and troubling question of conversion. Noting that the idea of religion in this period and region must be seen to be relational (rather than as dualistic, as it developed in the west), Murphy investigates what Turak, Hindu or Sikh meant at this time. She delineates the concept of ‘commensurability’ to give a perspective on how Turaks were constructed as the others of Sikhs in this literature, but also how

the commensurable institution of conversion mirrored aspects common to both.
(p.xlvii)

Conversion and the Politics of Difference

The heuristic load that the term 'conversion' carries in Punjab is then explored in three different essays in this volume, pertaining to different but linked periods (Murphy's, Malhotra's, and Adcock's). In recent years in the historiography of South Asia, the term 'conversion' has been complicated to show many gradual, novel, and complex ways in which communities or individuals change their religious affiliations.⁵⁰ The term is no longer deployed primarily to open up the domain of the evangelizing ambitions of the Christian missionaries, though this continues to be an area of investigation,⁵¹ or to discuss the apparently intractable problem of the spread of Islam in India, though path-breaking contributions have been made in this area.⁵² In the context of Punjab these essays show that there were ways in which the idea of conversion simultaneously hardened community boundaries even as it allowed the breaching of those divisions. Murphy's essay, by elaborating the theme of 'martyrdom' explored in Fenech's earlier work,⁵³ dwells on how martyrdom developed as a central thematic in Sikh representations of the self through the trope of 'conversion'. Yet the moment of conversion, even if presented as a choice between martyrdom and ignominy, inexorably drew the self close to its supposed other. The gradual reifying of the idea of conversion within the Sikh tradition (along with that of martyrdom) pushes us to investigate its meanings in the changing political contexts of Punjab. Significantly, the representation of 'conversion' against the background of conflict over political power, as was the context of Gurbilas literature, directs attention to the insight provided by Talal Asad; he argues for the importance of power and its configurations in any analysis of religion in a socio-historical situation, rather than perceiving religion as a universalist phenomena standing on its own.⁵⁴ Thus the changing understandings of Hindu, Sikh, and Musalman/Turaks in Punjab must also be seen to be contingent upon the political situation at a given time, even as accretions of cultural markers contributed to identity.

The saga of Haqiqat Rai as represented in the nineteenth century that Malhotra discusses briefly in her essay highlights how Hindu and Sikh groups came to associate conversion with the abuse of **(p.xlviii)** political power by the Turaks in Punjab. Malhotra elaborates this idea in her discussion of Piro, showing how by the mid-nineteenth century the conversion trope could plausibly be displaced to any supposed abuse of power by the 'Musalmans'—even when the Sikhs ruled. However, the putative conversion of the Muslim Piro to the Gulabdasi sect points to how this conversion also allowed for the reifying of religious identities, if only to exhibit in the larger context the speciousness of divisions in the first place. This latter attitude—that religious divisions were specious—had a long history within bhakti literature, and was used to mock the ritual-oriented religiosity of authority figures. Finally, Adcock examines the shrill polemics of the early

twentieth century and shows that those who thrived on controversies that demarcated community boundaries, themselves moved between different identities. Taken together, these essays complicate both the term conversion and its articulation in Punjabi society. Indeed, conversion, it seems, was implicated in the complex and multi-dimensional ways in which modern communities came to be constructed.

Anna Bigelow, who delineates the symbolic power of three shared sacred sites in contemporary Indian Punjab draws out another aspect of inter-community relations, namely what she calls 'pro-social encounters'. All the sites she discusses are associated with different expressions of Islamic piety—the *dargah* (tomb) of Hyder Shaikh in Malerkotla, shrines commemorating events from the life of the famous Chisti Sufi Shaikh Farid in Faridkot, and a *maseet* (mosque) in Gobindpura. Rather than reading tolerance at these places as the outcome of passive non-interference, Bigelow suggests in her analysis of shared sacred sites that it is the positive effort on the part of various interested parties to work towards promoting peace that makes space for varied—and not contestatory—interpretations of the power of the sacred. Importantly, this desire for harmony does not mean the erasure of difference. In fact, different ritual specialists and those with a stake in a site's continuing religious life often understood the power of the sacred in separate ways. What is critical, and Bigelow's essay lays this out clearly, is people's ability to make space for alternate and pluralistic understanding of a site's religious meaning. **(p.xlix)**

What Bigelow has observed in the course of her fieldwork and discussed with theoretical clarity, has been a kind of movement in contemporary Indian Punjab. It seems the dominant Punjabi Jat-Sikhs and their Hindu neighbours have over the last decade restored and rebuilt over two hundred mosques destroyed in partition riots. This has been accomplished either with their resources and initiative, sometimes at the behest of the *Jamaat-e-Islami*, and at times with the help of funds remitted from relatives in the Sikh diaspora. It is with this background that the latest case of the Ghumman family's similar effort in Sarwarpur has received celebratory acknowledgement.⁵⁵ Is this the case of post colonial Indian Punjab's remorse over the extremities of violence during the Partition? Undoubtedly this gesture of symbolic amity has enormous power, not least because Punjab saw the worst of partition violence. However, this magnanimity for a mere 1.5 per cent Muslim population of the state, many of whom are migrant labour, must be put in perspective. On the one hand it shows how the trend of hardening of religious lines and political posturing on the issue since the demolition of the Babri Masjid is bucked in Punjab, exemplified by the pro-social encounters that Bigelow highlights. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that the miniscule Muslim population of Indian Punjab is not a threat in terms of numbers, economic presence, nor does it spawn a fear of cultural conquest, both of which are anti-Muslim bogies favoured by the Hindu Right. The saga of conflict in Indian Punjab is being played out with a sharper edge in

relation to the dalits, who have larger numbers and represent greater prosperity. Nevertheless there is no doubt that pro-sociality encourages people to look at themselves as tolerant and multi-dimensional.

In contrast to the edifices of amity being constructed in Indian Punjab, Pakistani Punjab is perhaps going through the worst period of intra-community conflict in its history. In a country that is more than 95 per cent Muslim, it is astounding that the tag of '*kafir*' or infidel is being bandied about to brand people.⁵⁶ It is not just Hindu, Sikh and Christian minorities who are victimized, but also the Shi'i and Ahmadiyya 'minorities'.⁵⁷ Increasingly the divisions between the Wahabi and the Bareilvi factions of the majority Sunni sect are coming to the fore, seen for instance in the targeting of the shrines of revered **(p.1)** Sufi saints; suicide bombers targeted Data Ganj Baksh's shrine in the heart of Lahore on 1 July 2010 and Sakhi Sarwar's shrine in Dera Ghazi Khan on 3 April 2011. As Ayesha Jalal has shown, the idea of jihad has undergone unimaginable metamorphosis in recent years. From a concept that was historically deployed in the South Asian context as much to promote peace as war, it is now understood primarily as an individual's right to fight not just the 'West', but others perceived to be enemies and infidels. The ethical aspect of the concept, the greater jihad, has given way, as has the right of the state to initiate it.⁵⁸ The attack on the Sufi shrine represents a desire to sunder a quintessentially shared feature of Punjabis' piety, the faith in the shrines with their spiritual sweep and miraculous powers.⁵⁹

Simona Sawhney picks just this ominous moment of violence—of young men willingly sacrificing life for a cause perceived as greater than themselves by exploding bombs at an Ahmadiyya mosque—to inquire into an earlier phenomenon of 'revolutionary terrorism'. While the romance of sacrifice and death are linked with the idea of patriotic exhortation directed at the youth, Sawhney turns to the writings of the young man gifted with clear thinking—Bhagat Singh. Using the canvas of a range of writings emanating from the radical, socialist and democratic traditions of the West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bhagat Singh displayed an astonishing cosmopolitanism in order to forge a democratic nationalism. What makes a hero and what gives the hero the right to inflict violence, including on the self, were issues that troubled Bhagat Singh. The similarities with Gandhi were only too visible, but so were the enormous differences. Similarly the case for drawing parallels with the present manifestations of terrorist violence is there, but so are very significant distinctions. One of the distinguishing points that Sawhney highlights with subtlety is the manner in which the perception of the 'West' has undergone a change. From a beacon of hope and cosmopolitanism, the West is viewed by many youth growing up in the third world today as the seedbed for spawning prejudiced neo-imperialists. Hope and cosmopolitanism have had a conjoint death. And the line dividing the romance of death with its sheer

brutality erased. The projected essentialism of cultures then seems the unfortunate fallout of a globalizing world. **(p.li)**

Punjabiyyat and the 'Idea(s) of Punjab'

In this volume, then, we bring together essays with disparate and related themes, from historical and contemporary times, collectively investigating or alluding to different facets of a lived Punjabiyyat. By encouraging our contributors to think about aspects of Punjabi culture and history, we hope we have added to the strength of a growing discipline of cultural history from an important region in South Asia, the complexity of whose cultural and historical inheritance has not received adequate attention. We have not only emphasized the amorphous and shadowy nature of our nodal idea of Punjabiyyat, but also underlined that for all its ambiguity, the notion is real in so far as it exercises people's imaginations, emotions, experiences, and a sense of self. For far too long, we contend, the idea has been ignored because it does not fit into given neat boundaries, whether political or religious. The messiness inherent in the plethora of new questions, or in rethinking older engagements with newer insights, is a welcome disorder that we hope this volume ushers.

While we have spoken of the nebulousness of Punjabiyyat, we would also, perhaps paradoxically, argue that it is pervasive; indeed, its pervasiveness may play some role in its vitality as an identity going largely unexplored. Punjabiness slips into so many aspects of popular culture that there seems to be no need to explicate it separately. Punjabiyyat's wholehearted embrace by the Bombay film industry is a case in point. Bollywood's hybrid Hindi-Punjabi-Urdu lyrics, the musical genius of some Punjabi emigrants recognized and nurtured by the film industry, or the use of lilting Punjabi folk melodies and tunes that carried the flavour of Punjab, as for example in the unforgettable beats of O.P. Nayyar, indicate this ubiquitous presence. Something similar is happening with Punjabi poetry. The perennial popularity of Bulleh Shah in Punjab has now become a larger phenomenon with broad celebration of his compositions in both India and Pakistan thanks to the reach of cinema and music. From the film *Bobby's* (1971) adaptation of Bulleh Shah's poetry—*beshak mandir masjid todo Bulleh Shah yeh kahta* (made by Raj Kapoor, the Peshawar-born thespian of the foremost family of migrant Punjabis in Bollywood)—to Rabbi Shergill's 2005 chart buster *Bulla ki Jaana*, **(p.lii)** to the recent *Ranjha Ranjha kardi main ape Ranjha hoi* from the film *Raavan* (2010; directed by the Tamil Mani Ratnam), Bulleh Shah has become synonymous with Punjabi *sufiana kalaam*. The celebration of the Hindu upper caste Khatri identity, often lovingly (if garishly) depicted in extravagant marriages and rituals, is the most recent expression of second and third generation Punjabis in the Bombay film industry whose parents/grandparents came from Punjab.⁶⁰ In recent decades Punjabi identity in diaspora communities too has been partly coalesced by musical experimentation, creating hybridized sounds nevertheless sutured to ethnic identities.⁶¹ This has helped shape South Asian identity for numerous youth growing up in western and other countries. However, the very ubiquity of

this apparently familiar and loved (or denigrated) Punjabi culture should not mean that it does not require rigorous study.

By delving into variegated aspects of Punjab's culture and history, we hope to elucidate the idea of Punjabiya, as well as to complicate it. We do not imagine the volume as a source for a definitive list of criteria that might tell us what it means to be Punjabi. Nor is this volume an attempt to posit a simple, hydraulic relationship—historically or today—between Punjabiya, on the one hand, and communalism, religious conflict and violence, on the other. Lived realities are, of course, much more complex than such a dichotomy allows for. And certainly, we are acutely aware that Punjabiya and the articulation of oppositional or conflictual religious identities are implicated in the same historical processes. At the same time, however—and undoubtedly underscoring the complexity of the issue at hand—we want to gesture towards the potential of Punjabiya to act as an antidote to the politics of antagonism.

Our endeavour is to foreground the complexities of such issues, and to put forward different perspectives on and approaches to engage with them. In doing so, we hope this volume will both historicize and complicate the idea of Punjab and Punjabiya, and provide an important comparative perspective for the study of Indian regions.

Notes:

(†) This Introduction has benefitted from careful readings by David Gilmartin and Gurinder Singh Mann. We would like to thank them for their helpful comments.

(1) The following discussion has benefited from theoretical insights on cultural history in Lynn Hunt, 'Introduction: History, Culture and Text', (p.iii) in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 1-22; Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

(2) J.S. Grewal, 'The Historian's Panjab', in his *Miscellaneous Articles*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1974, pp. 1-10.

(3) J.S. Grewal, *Social and Cultural History of the Punjab: Prehistoric, Ancient, and Early Medieval*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004.

(4) This is evident in Muzaffar Alam's *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, for example. One also sees this reflected in Chetan Singh's *Region and Empire: Panjab in the Seventeenth Century*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.

(5) J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 99-127.

(6) Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010; Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010, p. 27.

(7) On the Ghadar movement, see the seminal study by Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organization & Strategy*, Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1983. On the Khalistan movement, see Giorgio Shani, *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age*, New York: Routledge, 2008, esp. pp. 40-99. On remittances from the Gulf to Pakistan, see Jonathan Addleton, *Undermining the Centre: The Gulf Migration and Pakistan*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1992.

(8) This could include anything on a spectrum between deeply-sedimented emotive ties to native place/locality, on the one hand, to itinerancy, on the other hand. On ties to native place/locality, see Mir, *The Social Space of Language*, chap. 4. On itinerancy in Punjab, see Neeladri Bhattacharya, 'Predicaments of Mobility: Peddlers and Itinerants in Nineteenth-century Northwestern India', in Claude Makovits, Jacques Pouchepadass, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds), *Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia 1750-1950*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2003, pp. 163-214.

(9) The clearest linguistic exposition of the language is Christopher Shackle, 'Panjabi', in Dhanesh Jain and George Cardona (eds), *The Indo-Aryan Languages*, New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 581-621. We should note that Shackle considers Siraiki a separate language, but for the purposes of this volume we choose to subsume it in Punjabi not for political, but rather for historical reasons. The Siraiki movement is a modern phenomenon, dating from the 1970s, and is situated in a very particular context of Pakistani politics. To treat it as a separate language for the period under study in this volume, which ranges from the medieval to the contemporary periods strikes us as **(p.liv)** anachronistic. On the movement, see Christopher Shackle, 'Siraiki: A Language Movement in Pakistan', *Modern Asian Studies*, 11 (3), 1977, pp. 379-403; and Tariq Rahman, 'The Siraiki Movement in Pakistan', *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 19 (1), 1995, pp. 1-25.

(10) We should note that of these dialects, Lahnda alone is no longer common in linguistic discussions of Punjabi dialects. Shackle, for example, does not include it in his exposition of the language in his essay, 'Panjabi'. Today, linguists generally use the term to refer to a distinct Indo-Aryan language. One finds a number of such references in Dhanesh Jain and George Cardona (eds), *The Indo-Aryan Languages*, New York: Routledge, 2003. See, for example, pp. 240, 545, 652, and 898. This dovetails with colonial linguist George Grierson's analysis in his famous linguistic survey of Indian languages, where he identified Lahnda as the language spoken in Western Punjab. See George Grierson, *Grierson on Punjabi* [reprint of Punjabi sections of *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. 9], Patiala:

Languages Department, 1961 [1919]. For our purposes, however, we follow the tradition of Punjabi literary criticism that views Lahnda as a dialect of Punjabi, one particularly significant to medieval and early modern literary production. See, for example, Mohan Singh Uberoi's foundational text, *A History of Panjabi Literature (1100-1932)*, Jalandhar: Bharat Prakashan, 1971 [1933].

(11) Denis Matringe, 'Hir Varis Shah, A Story Retold', in Vasudha Dalmia and Theo Damsteegt (eds), *Narrative Strategies: Essays on South Asian Literature and Film*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 19.

(12) Carla Petievich, *When Men Speak as Women: Vocal Masquerade in Indo-Muslim Poetry*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007.

(13) The reasons for this are explored in Farina Mir, 'Imperial Policy, Provincial Practices: Colonial Language Policy in Nineteenth Century India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 43 (4), 2006, pp. 395-427.

(14) See Mir, *The Social Space of Language*, pp. 84-5.

(15) P.H.M. van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition: Influence and Authority in Nineteenth Century India*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1972.

(16) N.G. Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1966.

(17) On designating 'agricultural' and 'non-agricultural' tribes, see Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill*. On the creation of customary law, see Neeladri Bhattacharya, 'Remaking Custom: The Discourse and Practice of Colonial Codification', in R. Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal (eds), **(p.lv)** *Tradition, Dissent, and Ideology*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 20-51; and David Gilmartin, 'Customary Law and *Shari'at* in British Punjab', in Katherine P. Ewing (ed.), *Shari'at and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 43-62.

(18) It should be noted that some colonial officials had more nuanced understandings of Jat identity. Denzil Ibbetson, for example, noted important distinctions within this group.

(19) Anshu Malhotra, *Gender, Caste and Religious Identities: Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 24-34.

(20) On the canal colonies, see Imran Ali, *The Punjab Under Imperialism 1885-1947*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. On colonial ethnographic logics, see Richard Fox, *The Lions of the Punjab*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

(21) See, for example: Arnaud Sauli, 'Circulation and Authority: Police, Public Space and Territorial Control in Punjab, 1861–1920', in Markovits *et al.* (eds), *Society and Circulation*, pp. 215–39; Rajit Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2003; and Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: the Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849–1947*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005.

(22) Ali, *The Punjab Under Imperialism*.

(23) Richard Eaton, 'The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Baba Farid', and 'Court of Man, Court of God: Local Perceptions of the Shrine of Baba Farid, Pakpattan, Punjab', in his *Essays on Islam and Indian History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 203–46.

(24) Prem Chowdhry, *The Veiled Women: Shifting Gender Equations in Rural Haryana 1880–1990*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. For how the laws affected 'high caste' widows, see Anshu Malhotra, 'Ascetic Widowhood or Widow Remarriage? Dilemma for the New Punjabi Elite', in her *Gender, Caste and Religious Identities*, pp. 82–115.

(25) Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *Dowry Murder: The Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

(26) Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849–1947*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1988.

(27) See, for example, on Calcutta, Lahore, and Bombay, respectively: Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny*, London: Routledge, 2005; William J. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008; and Preeti Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: The Indian Making of British Bombay, 1854–1918*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. **(p.lvi)**

(28) In addition to Glover 2008, see Ian Talbot, 'A Tale of Two Cities: The Aftermath of Partition for Lahore and Amritsar 1947–1957', *Modern Asian Studies*, 41 (1), 2007, pp. 151–85.

(29) Malhotra, *Gender, Caste and Religious Identities*.

(30) Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression: The Urdu Middleclass Milieu in Mid-Twentieth Century India and Pakistan*, London: Routledge, 2006.

(31) There are, however, increasingly scholarly correctives to this. See Anna Bigelow's essay in this volume as well as her, *Sharing the Sacred: Practicing Pluralism in Muslim North India*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

(32) Our thanks to David Gilmartin for this point, whose own work is at the vanguard in this respect.

(33) K.W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in Nineteenth Century Punjab*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1975; David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988; Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994; Bob van der Linden, *Moral Languages from Colonial Punjab: The Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj and Ahmadiyahs*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2008; Spencer Lavan, *The Ahmadiyah Movement: A History and Perspectives*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1974; and Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and its Medieval Background*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

(34) For such a stance, see Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation*, Delhi: Viking, 1996.

(35) Jones contended that in his *Satyarth Prakash* Dayananda Sarasvati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, argued for caste based on the merit of a person rather than birth, advocating an 'open social system'. See Jones, *Arya Dharm*, p. 33. For a different view that argues for Dayananda's ambivalence on caste reforms, see Anshu Malhotra, 'The Body as a Metaphor for the Nation: Caste, Masculinity and Femininity in the Satyarth Prakash of Dayananda Sarasvati', in A.A. Powell and S. Lambert-Hurley (eds), *Rhetoric and Reality: Gender and Colonial Experience in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 121-53.

(36) On the dalit Ad Dharm movement of Punjab, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Social Vision of Untouchables*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1988.

(37) On the diverse aspects of 'conversion' and the different modes and motivations for such an occurrence, see Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan (p.lvii) Clarke, 'Introduction', in Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke (eds), *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 1-21.

(38) John C.B. Webster, *Religion and Dalit Liberation: An Examination of Perspectives*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2002.

(39) On the manner in which religion developed as a transhistorical and transcultural category see Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993; and Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World*

Religions, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. On the usage of the term 'Hinduism', see Heinrich von Stietencron, 'Hinduism: On the Proper Use of a Deceptive Term', in his *Hindu Myth, Hindu History: Religion, Art and Politics*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2005, pp. 227-48. On different components constituting Hinduism, see Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer, 'Hinduism: The Five Components and Their Interaction', in Heidrun Bruckner, Anne Feldhaus and Aditya Malik (eds), *Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer: Essays on Religion, Literature and Law*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004, pp. 401-19.

(40) Gauri Vishwanathan, 'Colonialism and the Construction of Hinduism', in Gavin Flood (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, pp. 23-44.

(41) Though Jats are placed as *shudras* in the Hindu caste hierarchy, they were the powerful land-owning dominant caste of Punjab.

(42) These included the later fiery Singh Sabha supporter Ditt Singh, the harijan Tara Singh and the prostitute Piro.

(43) *Census of India 1891 - Vol. XIX - The Punjab and Its Feudatories*, Calcutta: Government Printing, 1892, p. 88.

(44) This is seen, for example, in the bi-annual journal *The Panjab Past and Present* started by Ganda Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala in 1967; and the *The Journal of Regional History*, established in 1980 and published by Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

(45) J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; and Harnik Deol, *Religion and Nationalism in India: The Case of the Punjab*, London: Routledge, 2000.

(46) Some aspects of these debates have been captured well in J.S. Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1998.

(47) The literature here is too vast to be referenced fully except mentioning a few outstanding examples. W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986; Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001; and Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan: History, (p.lviii) Memory, and Biography in the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

(48) W.H. McLeod, 'The Development of the Sikh Panth', in his *Exploring Sikhism: Aspects of Sikh Identity, Culture, and Thought*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 49-69.

(49) Louis E. Fenech, *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus: The Court of God in the World of Men*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.

(50) Robinson and Clarke, *Religious Conversion in India*.

(51) Robert E. Frykenberg (ed.) *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication Since 1500*, London: Routledge, Curzon, 2003.

(52) Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204–1760*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

(53) Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition: Playing the 'Game of Love'*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

(54) Talal Asad, 'Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz', *Man*, 18 (2), 1983, pp. 237–59.

(55) Khushwant Singh, 'Rebuilding Secularism, Gandhi Style', *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 13 June 2010, p. 15; Chander S. Dogra, 'Shades of the Old Punjab', *Outlook* (New Delhi), 5 July 2010, pp. 58–61. More recently, a Muslim industrial house based in Malerkotla—the Sohrab Group of Industries—running the Hars Charitable Trust has restored a church targeted in the wake of the threat to burn Qurans (in the USA). 'Muslim Trust Restores Church', *The Times of India* (New Delhi), 20 September 2010, p. 13.

(56) Amir Mir, 'Just Who is not a Kafir?' *Outlook* (New Delhi), 19 July 2010, pp. 54–6.

(57) A controversy erupted over the branding 'kafir' on the coffin of the young Hindu Prem Chand of Pakistan who died in a plane crash near Islamabad. Mohammad Wajihuddin, 'Don't Use the K Word', *The Times of India* (New Delhi), 20 September 2010, p. 13.

(58) Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008; Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2008.

(59) See Farina Mir's essay in this volume.

(60) Srijana Mitra Das, 'Partition and Punjabiyyat in Bombay Cinema: The Cinematic Perspective of Yash Chopra and Others', *Contemporary South Asia*, 15 (4), 2006, pp. 453–71.

(61) Ananya Jahanara Kabir, 'Musical Recall: Postmemory and the Punjabi Diaspora', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, vol. 24, 2004, pp. 172–89.